

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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R 161710Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2637

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 0205

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: FPOR, OAU, AO, NG

SUBJQPV NIGER AND ANGOLA

SUMMARY:

PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE CONVOKED ME JAN 15 TO DISCUSS
NIGER POLICY TOWARDS ANGOLA. HE SAID DECISIONS TO
RECOGNIZE MPLA ON EVE OF OAU SUMMIT HAD NOT BEEN
INFLUENCED BY IDEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS OR BY
PRESSURE FROM MPLA SUPPORTERS. SOLE REASON FOR
DECISION WAS THAT GON JUDGED IT TO BE IN ITS NADUONAL
INTEREST TO DO SO. KOUNTCHE'S PRESENTATION WAS
DEFENSIVE AND UNCONVINCING BUT MEETING ENDED BEFORE
I COULD GET TO HEART OF MATTER ON REASONS WHY NIGER HAD
SWITCHED AT LAST MINUTE AND WHERE GON GOES
FROM HERE ON ANGOLAN ISSUE. AS OCCASIONS ARISE
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I PLAN TO PROBE FURTHER. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE CONVOKED ME MORNING JAN 15 IN ORDER, HE SAID, TO EXPLAIN WHY NIGER HAD ABANDONED ITS NEUTRAL NON-RECOGNITION POLICY ON ANGOLAN ISSUE AND ON EVE OF OAU SUMMIT HAD RECOGNIZED MPLA. STARTING WITH PHILOSOPHICAL COMMENTARY ON DIFFICULTIES IN HAVING FRANK EXCHANGES BECAUSE OF DIFFERING PRESPECTIVES OF ANGOLAN PROBLEM AND OF NATIONAL INTEREST, PRESIDENT SAID HE WANTED ME TO UNDERSTAND THAT IN DECIDING TO RECOGNIZE MPLA GON HAD TAKEN THIS STEP BECAUSE IT WAS IN ITS NATIONAL INTERESTS TO DO SO AND FOR NO OTHER REASON. THERE WERE TIMES WHEN NIGER ADOPTED POSITIONS AT UN AND ELSEWHERE WHICH MIGHT BE ANNOYING TO US BUT WHICH GON BELIEVED WERE REQUIRED BY DOMESTIC OR POLITICAL IMPERATIVES OF MOMENT. IN ADDITION, HE OCCASSIONALLY USED TERMS LIKE IMPERIALISM ARR COLONIALISM IN SPEECHES EVEN THOUGH HE WAS NOT AN "ISM" PERSON. HERE AGAIN, POLITICS REQUIRED SUCH ORATORY.

2. HOWEVER, IN CASE OF ANGOLA IT WAS NOT ORATORY BUT WHAT HE CONSIDERED SOLID NATIONAL INTERESTS WHICH HAD LED TO DECISION TO RECOGNIZE MPLA. HE WANTED TO REASSURE USG THAT (1) WHILE STRONG PRESSURE HAD BEEN PUT ON NIGER BY NIGERIA AND MPLA TO SUPPORT MPLA, OUTSIDE INFLUENCES HAD NOT RPT NOT BEEN FACTOR IN DECISION AND (2) THERE WAS NOTHING IDEOLOGICAL ABOUT DECISION. HE WAS UNIMPRESSED BY SOVIET PERFORMANCE IN AFRICA, DEPLORED ITS INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA AND UNLIKE MOST OF THOSE IN MPLA CAMP AT OAU, HE HAD CALLED FOR END OF ALL FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT. AT ADDIS, WHERE HE ADDED PARENTHETICALLY IN-FIGHTING HAD BEEN INCREDIBLE, HE HAD WORKED FOR COMPROMISE ON LAST DAY BUT UNSUCCESSFULLY.

3. REVERTING TO NIGER'S NATIONAL INTERESTS, HE SAID HE KNEW VERY WELL WHAT COUNTRIES WERE HELPING NIGER AND MOST OF WHAT NIGER RECEIVED FROM USSR WAS WORDS AND CULTURAL SHOWS. THIS WAS ONE REASON WHY HE HAD DELAYED APPOINTING AMBASSADOR TO MOSCOW
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WHILE GOING AHEAD WITH AMBASSADOR TO PEKING. AS LONG AS HE REMAINED CHIEF OF STATE NEITHER COMMUNISM NOR USSR WOULD HAVE ROLE TO PLAY IN NIGER.

4. POINTING TO MAP KOUNTCHE SAID NIGER'S POSITION IN AFRICA AND THAT OF CHAD WERE OF SOME STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE TO SOVIET UNION BUT AGAIN, USSR WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO BENEFIT FROM NIGER'S SITUATION AS LONG AS HE WAS

AROUND.

5. IN SHORT, NIGER HAD DECIDED TO RECOGNIZE MPLA
FOR REASONS WHICH SHOULD IN NO WAY BE OF CONCERN TO
US.

6. NOTING THAT, LIKE NIGER, IDEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONXC
HAD NOT BEEN FACTOR IN OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS MPLA,
I SAID I WELCOMED THESE ASSURANCES AND THIS OPPORTUNITY
TO CLARIFY NIGER'S POLICY ON ANGOLAN ISSUE BECAUSE
FRANKLY NIGER'S SUDDEN AND LAST MINUTE SWITCH HAD
SURPRISED AND PUZZLED ME ESPECIALLY SINCE
OUR RESPECTIVE PERCEPTIONS OF THIS PROBLEM
HAD SEEMED TO BE VERY SIMILAR AND CLOSE. BEFORE
I COULD PROBE FURTHER PRESIDENT ASKED TO BE EXCUSED FOR
ANOTHER MEETING AND IT WAS LEFT AT THAT FRUSTRATING POINT.
COMMENT: FRENCH AMB. COSTILHES WAS LEAVING PRESIDENCY AS I
ARRIVED FOR AUDIENCE. IN COMPARING NOTES, LATER,
WE ESTABLISHED THAT KOUNTCHE MADE SAME SPEECH TO
BOTH OF US NEARLY WORD FOR WORD. SO FAR WE ARE ONLY
TWO COMS SO FAVORED. KOUNTCHE'S PRESENTATION WAS
DEFENSIVE AND HIS RATIONALIZATION MISSED POINT ABOUT
US CONCERN OVER ANGOLAN SITUATION. UNFORTUNATELY
KOUNTCHE ENDED MEETING BEFORE ONE COULD ASK OBVIOUS
QUESTIONS: RATIONALIZATION ASIDE, WHAT WAS REASON
GON DECIDED AT LAST MINUTE SWITCH ITS POSITION AND
RECOGNIZE MPLA, WHERE DOES NIGER GO FROM HERE ON
ANGOLAN ISSUE AND WHAT ROLE DOES IT FORESEE FOR OAU?
AS OPPORTUNITIES PRESENT THEMSELVES, I PLAN PRESS MATTER.HECK

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